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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 001664

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2019  
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SUBJECT: ROK DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER READOUT ON IRAN VISIT

REF: SEOUL 1653

Classified By: POL M/C James L. Wayman. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

1. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Young-joon, MOFAT's point man on Iran issues, told the DCM on October 20 that post-election protests in Iran represented conflict between "hardliners and other hardliners" and not between the government and the people. Lee dismissed the protests as a "tempest in a teacup," not a harbinger of a broad-based democracy movement. Lee, just back from a visit to Iran, said he had reinforced the overall USG message about Tehran's nuclear program during discussions with three senior interlocutors. One of those interlocutors claimed that senior Iranian leaders were "positive" about upcoming talks with the P5 1. Lee related that the Iranians want to do joint medical assistance projects with the ROK in Afghanistan. End summary.

#### Readout on Visit to Iran...

2. (C) During an October 20 meeting to deliver a demarche about a massive gas deal between a ROK company and Iran (reftel), MOFAT's point man on Iranian issues, Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Young-joon, gave the DCM a readout on his recent visit to Tehran. Lee began by noting that the ROK Embassy in Tehran had a much different take on the current Iranian political scene than the USG and most Western media. He related that the ROK Ambassador had characterized the post-election protests as a conflict between "hardliners and other hardliners" and not between the government and the people. Lee dismissed the protests as a "tempest in a teacup," not a harbinger of a broad-based democracy movement within Iranian society.

#### ...Where He Made USG Points to Senior Interlocutors

3. (S) Lee said he had extended meetings and meals with three senior Iranian interlocutors: Foreign Minister Mottaki, Supreme National Security Council Deputy Secretary Bagheri and Deputy Foreign Minister Akhoundzadeh. Lee explained that he underscored these points in all his discussions:

-- The ROK, along with other responsible members of the international community, considers the recent talks in Geneva to offer new hope for a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue;

-- Iran must capitalize on the Obama administration's new policy of engaging Tehran with dialogue;

-- Iran should follow the ROK lead in obtaining nuclear fuel from overseas sources; and,

-- Iran should stop complaining about being "singled out" by the United States. Washington applied non-proliferation standards evenly to all countries, including North Korea. Moreover, if the ROK were to develop a clandestine enrichment program, there was no doubt that the USG would impose sanctions on Seoul -- even though the ROK is a treaty ally.

Bagheri "Positive" About Talks with P5 1  
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14. (C) Lee noted that his interlocutors halfheartedly repeated standard Iranian rhetoric defending their nuclear program. The DFM said, though, that Bagheri had unexpectedly stressed that Tehran was taking the Obama administration's policies "seriously" but was looking for "more action" and no deadlines. Bagheri also mentioned that senior Iranian leaders were "positive" about talks with the P5 1.

Proposed ROK-Iran Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan  
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15. (C) According to Lee, FM Mottaki -- who is slated to visit Tokyo soon -- proposed that the ROK and Iran do joint humanitarian work in Afghanistan. Lee said the Iranians do joint medical assistance projects with Japan in Afghanistan and may be looking to do something similar with Korea. The DFM said he thought the Iranians would be willing to provide additional doctors for a ROK-run clinic at Bagram air base,

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but acknowledged it would be logistically easier to work with the Iranians somewhere other than Bagram.  
STEPHENS